

City of Seattle Housing Levy Oversight Committee



September 6, 2013

Councilmember Nick Licata, Chair
Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee
Seattle City Council
City Hall, 600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124-0025

Re: Housing Levy Administrative and Financial Plan

Dear Councilmember Licata,

The Housing Levy Oversight Committee has completed its review of policy changes to the Levy Administrative and Financial Plan (A & F Plan) recommended by the Office of Housing (OH). We reviewed proposed changes to the Rental Housing Program and Homeownership Program priorities and funding guidelines. This review included restructuring the A & F Plan to incorporate housing policies previously contained in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, to improve consistency and accessibility. After discussing program performance and input received from community stakeholders, and providing our own suggested changes, we are pleased to support the Levy A & F Plan legislation before the Committee.

We would like to acknowledge the successful completion of the Levy Acquisition & Opportunity Loan program. A&O Loans were new in the 2009 Housing Levy, designed to support strategic acquisition of properties during the downturn in our economy. Since 2010, project sponsors received five of these short-term bridge loans to acquire properties that will create 225 affordable rental and ownership units, exceeding Levy goals. Since the A&O Loan program is a temporary use of funds that are needed for permanent financing, the program is now drawing to a close. OH will continue to provide bridge loans with available funds. The policies guiding these loans are included in the Rental Housing and Homeownership programs.

As part of its review of Levy policies, the Oversight Committee discussed the question you raised: how housing produced with public resources is used to provide stable living situations for people with criminal backgrounds. We reviewed information about existing Levy-funded housing, federal fair housing policies, and the survey of nonprofit housing organizations conducted by OH. The Oversight Committee endorsed OH's recommendation to convene housing providers and members of the Council's stakeholder group to explore this issue, and several of our members are participating in these

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discussions. As a result of this work, and additional community input, the Oversight Committee supports the proposed new Levy policies giving priority to rental housing that provides opportunities for people with significant barriers to housing, such as criminal records. We also support the ongoing educational work of the stakeholder group, which focuses on housing opportunities in City-funded buildings that are already developed and operating. An update on this work will be on the agenda for our next meeting.

I appreciate the Council's interest in the Oversight Committee's perspective on these Levy policy issues. Please contact me or Maureen Kostyack, Housing Program and Development Manager, if you would like additional information about the Oversight Committee's deliberations.

Sincerely,

Josephine Tamayo Murray
Chair

cc: Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, HHSHC Committee Vice-Chair
Councilmember Bruce Harrell, HHSHC Committee Member
Rick Hooper, Director, Office of Housing